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Dear Mr. Chairman:

Thank you for your recent letter to Secretary Shultz expressing concern for the tragic plight of the thousands of Jewish refuseniks in the Soviet Union. We share your concern about the unwillingness of the Soviet Union to respect such basic human rights as freedom of movement.

The United States Government has consistently encouraged Soviet authorities to adopt a more favorable attitude toward Soviet Jews who wish to emigrate. Unfortunately, the Soviets have not been responsive to our efforts, labelling them as "interference" in their internal affairs. In short, U.S. influence on Soviet emigration practices and decisions remains limited. At the recent meeting in Helsinki commemorating the tenth anniversary of the signing of the Helsinki accords, Secretary Shultz reiterated U.S. intolerance for Soviet human rights abuse.

In response to your request that several letters and boxes be sent to Moscow via diplomatic pouch, I regret that as a matter of general practice, the Department of State does not forward mail through the pouch unless it is official business. It is contrary to the Department's regulations and against international diplomatic practice to transmit in the pouch items such as the letter and boxes you mentioned. The Department receives, and must refuse, many such requests each year. In a country like the Soviet Union, it is particularly important that our pouch policies be strictly followed and that the pouch's diplomatic inviolability never be called into question.

There are other avenues, however, which you may wish to explore in bringing concern for Jewish refuseniks to the attention of Soviet authorities. One possibility is to ask Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin in Washington to forward your materials. While we are not informed of specific procedures at the Soviet Embassy for handling such packages, we are aware that on at least one occasion such mail has been forwarded. Another option is to send the letters and boxes via regular international mail. While we are not sure that they would reach their ultimate destination this way, they would most certainly come to the attention of high level Soviet authorities.

The Honorable
Alfonse M. D'Amato,
Chairman, Commission on Security
and Cooperation in Europe,
United States Senate.

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I hope that this information is helpful to you. If I can be of assistance to you in this or any other matter, please do not hesitate to contact me.

With best wishes,

Sincerely,



William L. Ball, III
Assistant Secretary
Legislative and Intergovernmental Affairs

Drafted:EUR/SOV/SOBI:eashinn:eas 2AB
08/19/85 Ext. 28670 No. 122-0362
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